



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Council on Postsecondary Education
OFFICE OF THE POSTSECONDARY COMMISSIONER
560 Jefferson Boulevard Suite 100
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886-1304

Enclosure 5b4
April 14, 2016

Barbara S. Cottam
Chair

**Council on Elementary and
Secondary Education**

Daniel P. McConaghy
Chair

Amy Beretta, Esq.

Colleen A. Callahan, Ed.D.

Karin Forbes

Jo Eva Gaines

Marta V. Martinez

Lawrence Purtill

Joyce L. Stevos, Ph.D.

**Council on Postsecondary
Education**

William Foulkes
Chair

Michael Bernstein

Dennis Duffy, Esq.

The Honorable Thomas Izzo

Judy Ouellette

Kerry I. Rafanelli, Esq.

John J. Smith, Jr.

Dr. Jeffery A. Williams

TO: Members of the Council on Postsecondary Education

FROM: Jim Purcell, Ed.D, Commissioner for Postsecondary Education

DATE: April 4, 2016

RE: Proposal for changing the name and revising the curriculum of the Labor Studies minor to the Work, Labor and Social Justice minor at the University of Rhode Island

Background

The University of Rhode Island is announcing its intent to change the name of the Labor Studies minor to the Work, Labor and Social Justice minor and to revise the curriculum to reflect the interdisciplinary perspective of the minor. The minor in Work, Labor and Social Justice is offered through the Schmidt Labor Research Center at URI.

Rationale

URI's minor in Work, Labor and Social Justice aims to expand awareness of current issues facing work organizations and working people, as well as offering students an integrated 21st- century understanding of employment and labor. The minor also addresses how work impacts inequalities in global, complex societies. The emphasis will be on understanding the interdependence of government, work organizations and labor (working individuals and families). The minor will combine academic study with internship experiences to prepare students for a variety of relevant careers and/or graduate study in public policy, business, labor, and non-governmental organizations. The minor is available to all students seeking a broad perspective on how work as a social institution impacts individuals, other social institutions, such as families and politics, and societies.

The definition of work and how it is organized in the 21st century are urgent topics that affect myriad issues of sustainability and social justice and are key factors that contribute to the creation and maintenance of individual and global inequalities. As today's students will be in the workforce, it is essential to offer them knowledge of how to organize work to be compatible with democracies, the tension between workers' rights and corporate survival, the limits and promise of corporate citizenship, and how to design solutions that will create economic opportunity and social equality for an increasingly diverse workforce.

Institutional Role

This minor was previously offered but is being expanded to include a broader perspective and a wider interdisciplinary approach. Courses that address these issues will be distributed throughout the curriculum, resulting in an interdisciplinary minor that allows students to make connections from different disciplinary perspectives, as well as tailor the minor to coordinate with their other academic interests. The broad interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum, that spans three of the degree-granting colleges, provides an example of the University's academic priority of enhancing interdisciplinary learning and discovery.

Program

Students declaring this major are required to complete 18 credits including LRS 480: Seminar in Labor Studies and at least one internship course. The remaining 15 credits can be selected from courses in the following disciplines:

- Anthropology
- Communications
- Economics
- Human Development and Family Studies
- History
- Journalism
- Political Science
- Sociology
- Other courses approved in consultation with Schmidt Labor Research Center faculty.

A Sakai site will be created for this minor, giving students information on the course requirements and allowing them to store their Minor Curriculum Plan, their Learning Objectives Statement, and the syllabi and assignments from courses in their curriculum. The accumulation of course information will be used in the minor's capstone course which will include a portfolio project.

Faculty

The program will utilize faculty who already teach in the various departments that include course requirements for this minor.

Staff and Administration

No additional staff, advisors, or program director will be required.

Students

Students who are presently enrolled in the existing Labor Studies minor will be able to transition into the new minor with no disruption of their academic progress. Although students with any major may elect to take the minor in Work, Labor, and Social Justice, students majoring in the social sciences and business may be particularly interested in this minor.

Financial Viability

The courses in the minor are existing courses that are already offered. Since no additional faculty or learning resources are required for this minor, there should be no additional resources needed.

RIOPC Review

RIOPC staff reviewed the proposal for changing the name and revising the curriculum of the Labor Studies minor. The academic changes presented are within the mission, role and scope of the University of Rhode Island and do not require Council approval.